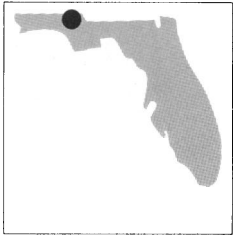

Marianna, Florida

CAROL ERON



For 10 years, community leaders in Marianna, Fla., had tried to infuse their aging, overtaxed medical establishment with young blood, without success. They applied to the National Health Service Corps and the community qualified for physicians, but the problem wasn't solved until a summer's day in 1975 when a vacationing physician passed through town and liked what he saw. Sponsored by the Corps, he opened a practice there in 1976.

The practice flourished, and he soon found himself in need of assistance. In a year, he was joined by another Corps physician, and then by a Corps nurse practitioner. After 2 years, the original Corps doctor no longer needed the support of the Corps, and he went into private practice. The second Corps physician anticipated being able to do the same within the year.

In addition to alleviating an urgent doctor shortage in the Marianna area, the new physicians introduced a host of medical innovations to the community. Better yet as far as townspeople are concerned, both physicians intend to remain permanently in Marianna.

AN ORANGUTAN, FRENETIC SWIRLS OF BLACK and red paint, stares at anyone who sits in one of the chairs placed directly before it.

"That's me," explains Bob Hoff, Air Force pilot turned physician, to a visitor caught looking at the canvas which decorates the otherwise subdued doctor's office. A resemblance between the two isn't immediately apparent, but once conversation gets going, you discover what it is.

In 1976, Bob Hoff — who is 44 but looks as if he practices the clean living he preaches to his patients — picked up and left the faculty of the University of Miami Medical School. He joined the National Health Service Corps and opened a family practice, the first of its kind in the rural town of Marianna, Fla.

Carol Eron, a Washington writer, is at work on a book about viruses.

On the first day, 15 to 20 patients came to the office, a renovated photographer's studio behind the community hospital. "Curiosity seekers," he calls them. Then business dropped to nothing. "Scared the hell out of me," he admits, but the practice started building rapidly, and in a few months there was a full schedule. By the end of the year he was seeing 35 patients a day, with about 25 percent of them new patients.

Meanwhile, he opened a clinic in Malone, a neighboring town, and immediately began seeing up to 25 patients 1 night a week there as well. He sponsored the training of Lamaze instructors and introduced the Lamaze method for the first time in Marianna — the first classes were held at his house. He chaired the new school health advisory committee for 2 years and he teaches the Advanced Cardiac Life Support Technique.

At the end of his first year in town, the practice had become so busy that he took on a partner, Dr. Albert Folds, who also joined the Corps. Together, they helped introduce new doctors' hours in Marianna. Whereas the town's seven other physicians traditionally saw patients 3 1/2 to 4 days a week and not on weekends, Dr. Hoff and Dr. Folds held hours from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., or later, 5 days a week and half a day on Saturday.

At the end of the second year, Dr. Hoff enlisted a nurse practitioner to staff the satellite clinic, which was also growing. Both the partnership and nurse practitioner were new ideas in Marianna.

Currently, Dr. Hoff is working to develop a birth-to-death protocol for preventive care, a health newsletter for his patients, and more liberal hospital policies concerning maternity care: for instance, picture-taking in the delivery room; birthing room; modified rooming-in; and the



Marianna's main street leads to the lush green farms of the Florida panhandle

presence of the husband during a caesarean section.

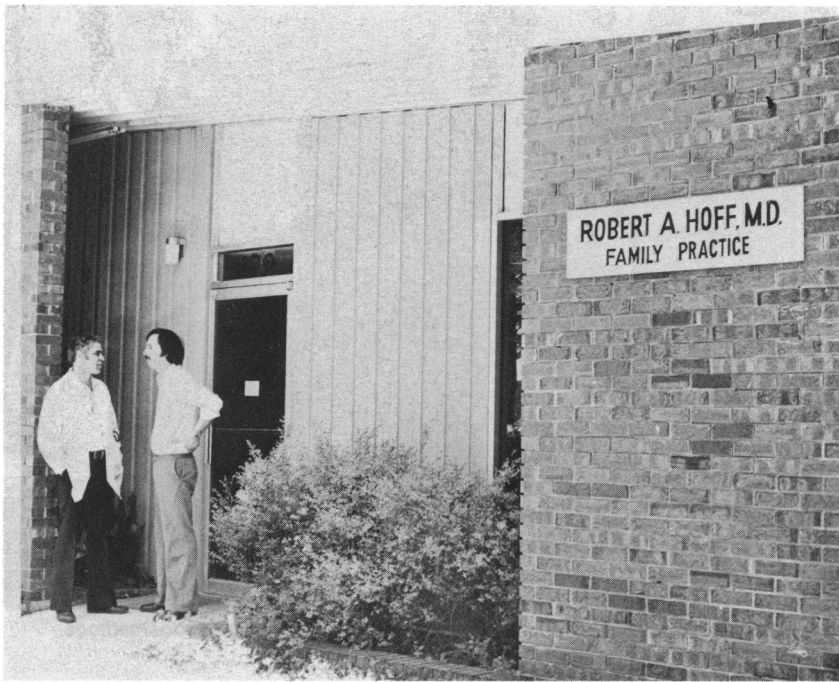
Many of the practices Dr. Hoff has introduced in Marianna have been eagerly accepted; some have not. Most of the hospital nurses have taken Lamaze training, and some of the other physicians now allow a husband to be present for delivery. But photographs are still not permitted; indeed, lawyers were called in to buttress the case against it. And when Hoff allowed a husband to stand inside the operating room door for a caesarean, there was a furor from the medical community. "I had to back off on that," he says. "But I try to tell them that I'm not a radical. These ideas come from the

people. It's what they want. We have to listen to them."

The Setting

Marianna is an old, quiet, slow-moving town of 10,000 situated in the green farming country of Florida's panhandle. Cows, peanuts, soybeans, and corn thrive here, as does the government, which operates several large rehabilitation and corrections institutions in the county and is a major employer. Nonetheless, 30 percent of families in the county live in poverty, and infant mortality and tuberculosis rates are high. Teenage pregnancy and V.D. are also major problems.

In Marianna itself, the seat of



Dr. Bob Hoff and Frank McHugh, nurse practitioner, share a discussion in front of their Marianna offices



On Bob Hoff's wall hangs a painting of a thoughtful, smiling orangutan

Jackson County, you will see tin-roofed shanties behind the sleek, modern courthouse, a gas station jutting rudely into the face of a faded Victorian mansion. Because the mansion's roof leaks, its elderly owner has retreated to a few rooms on the ground floor where she lives alone. On the main street of Marianna you can shop for a Hart, Schaffner & Marx suit or buy a

workshirt in the Dollar General Store, and Captain Cash, a computer, will handle your bank transaction.

There are nine churches in Marianna, a twin cinema, a country club, a newspaper, a radio station, a junior college, and a disco. A panoply of fast food eateries line the main route through town, but beer is the only liquor served in public places. "They have everything here you have anywhere else," one of Bob Hoff's children came to realize, "only less of it."

Not quite. But Marianna does have something that isn't found everywhere else: two drivers meeting at an intersection are both likely to stop and suggest that the other proceed first.

Jackson Hospital, a low turquoise-hued structure with 72 beds, is the pride of the town. A larger facility of 98 beds, under construction, is scheduled for completion in a year. The promise of the improved facility, in addition to the unusually high standards maintained by the

hospital, were prime attractions for Dr. Hoff.

So strictly is the hospital run that when a new physician comes to town, all of his hospital charts are audited for a full year. The Marianna medical community has also been known to run a doctor out if they don't approve — and they had just done so prior to Dr. Hoff's arrival in 1976, even though they were in urgent need of physicians.

For many years there were only seven physicians in town, including a surgeon, and no new doctors had come to Marianna for a decade. Of the seven, several were semiretired; another two took long vacations out of town. As a result, it was difficult to get an appointment unless you were already a patient. Some people just didn't receive care, and those who could afford to went elsewhere — to Dothan, Ala., three-quarters of an hour away, to Tallahassee or Pensacola, which are farther. When a Marianna community group applied to the National Health Service Corps, they qualified for four physicians.

Bob Hoff's Decision

The story of Bob Hoff's decision to practice in Marianna goes back to his Air Force days. You can tell by the expression in his voice that it is a story that he rather enjoys telling, particularly now that it is over. A native of San Francisco, he first came to Florida with the Air Force and learned to fly not far from Marianna. The Air Force gave him the chance to get to know small towns, and he discovered that he liked them. But after 12 years he had had enough. "I moved 15 times in 12 years," he says. "I didn't have much control over my own fate." However, he found he couldn't easily quit.

When he had learned to fly a bigger, faster jet, the EB-66, he obligated himself for 3 more years in the service. After finishing the third

year, he discovered that the Air Force had changed the rules and he was obligated for a fourth. Another way out was to fly 100 missions over North Vietnam, which he did, but still he was not released. "I had a job all lined up with United Airlines," he says, "but apparently I was so mad about having to stay in the service for an extra year I developed a temporary EKG anomaly." There went the airlines job.

Although he was 34, with a wife and four children, he began to consider medicine. "I liked dealing with people. It was a field where I could be independent, well respected, needed." He inquired at the University of Florida in Gainesville and was surprised to learn that as a high school dropout he lacked many of the requirements and, besides that, he was too old for medical school — they had never accepted anyone that old. Undaunted, Hoff took the necessary courses and persuaded both Gainesville and the University of Miami to accept him.

"I showed no shame," he says. "I pointed out that I'd served my country for 12 years, that I had a heap of medals, and then I couldn't even get out of the service. They wouldn't let me out. . . I tried to make them feel bad." He smiles.

After completing his residency in 1975, he remained as director of the family practice program at the University of Miami, and his family settled down at last in a house on the beach. The problem was that the job entailed a lot of administrative work, leaving him only 20 hours a week to see patients — one reason he had become a doctor in the first place. So he began to consider other offers, academic and private.

Then while vacationing with his family in northwest Florida, he stopped by Jackson Hospital in Marianna and asked if they needed any doctors. As he says, "They rolled out the carpet. They told me about the new hospital — the bond issue had just



Bob Hoff uses filmstrips to counsel a post-natal patient on birth control methods

been passed — and they volunteered to do anything to set me up here." They also told him that the town had qualified for National Health Service Corps physicians.

Marianna struck him as just right: the hospital was good, and he sensed strong community spirit, which he liked. But the financial help offered by the Corps was a critical factor in his decision: he had used up his resources going to medical school and couldn't afford to go very far into debt. The start-up costs in a small town, he knew, were high.

The Physician-Educator

In addition to being available longer hours than the other physicians, Dr. Hoff did several things that helped to make him immediately popular in Marianna. He saw anyone who came into the office whether they had an appointment or not, and he made it a practice to see scheduled patients on time. "I feel their time is just as important as mine," he says in a way that leaves no doubt about his meaning it. He also spent more time with patients than they had been accustomed to, and made patients feel free to ask questions.

He tried to save his patients money by educating them and by immunizing them with vaccine he got free from the Public Health Department. He explains to patients that rheumatic fever can result from an untreated strep throat and tells them how to recognize the possibility of a strep infection. Thus, he points out, they may save \$14 by coming in for a \$6 throat culture instead of a \$20 office visit.

His goals are to teach patients that they can do a lot to keep themselves healthy, and that those who take the responsibility will be happier and their medical costs less. All his patients are informed what medicine they are taking, why, and how it works. He wants to demythologize the doctor as an omnipotent healer — though not entirely, since, he points out, much depends on belief in the doctor and doing as he recommends.

He did have trouble dispelling the idea that a shot or antibiotic was necessary to cure a cold. "That took a lot of pressure. I'm sure I lost a few patients because of it." Finally, he tried giving parents a sample bottle of antibiotic containing one dose. "I said, 'You hold on to it in case we



Bob Hoff and Albert Folds take time from their medical practice to attend a Marianna Rotary Club meeting

need it in the middle of the night, then you won't have to go out to a drug store.' That trick worked well."

Patient compliance he finds is as good, if not better than in Miami. However, he himself has changed since going into practice. He came to realize that, "If I get mad or upset if they don't take their medicine, that's my trip. I don't have to get mad. Not taking their medicine is part of their sickness." In short: "I put up with a lot more than I used to."

This does not mean that he is easy on patients. Fiercely opposed to smoking, he doesn't allow it, or even magazines containing cigarette advertisements in his office; nor does he allow hospitalized patients to smoke. Those who claim they can't pay their bills are told, if they smoke, to give it up and pay up. Patients who wish to have their babies

delivered by him are not only urged, but required to take Lamaze training.

Overall, he reports, the preventive measures and self-responsibility he advocates have been well accepted, except among some of the older, and lonely people. "Many people," he says, "come to me just because they can't cope with their lives." He is willing to get involved in their lives.

Case: A workman was seriously injured on the job. His insurance provided income while he was out of work but would not pay for the extensive physical therapy he needed in order to go back to work. The man wanted desperately to work and was very depressed. Dr. Hoff helped him locate a lawyer skilled in worker's compensation suits.

Case: A child, much too small for her age, was brought to the office by

her mother and grandmother. Suspecting abuse, Dr. Hoff advised the child's parents to come in and talk things over. As a result, the father beat up the grandmother for meddling. Although she wasn't seriously injured, Dr. Hoff decided to hospitalize her overnight for observation and to underline the gravity of the situation to those concerned.

Expanding the Practice

From the time he arrived in Marianna, Dr. Hoff was under pressure to offer medical services in his wife's old hometown of Malone, which was without any physicians. There is no public transportation between Marianna and Malone, and it costs \$5 to be driven. The Malone area has a population of 4,000, many of whom are old and poor; a third are on Medicare and others can only

pay a couple of dollars for a visit to the doctor.

Dr. Hoff knew Malone couldn't support a full-time physician, so he opened a Monday-night clinic there in a cramped corner of the town hall. A public health nurse visits Malone on Fridays, so he chose Monday to avoid competition. Demand for care — up to 25 patients an evening — indicated that more regular medical service was needed, and Dr. Hoff decided to open a clinic staffed daily by a nurse practitioner, to be supervised by him and his partner.

He arranged for Frank McHugh, a nurse at Jackson Hospital, to take nurse-practitioner training at the University of Miami. After interning with Dr. Hoff, Mr. McHugh went to work in Malone in September 1978. Initially, he split his time between the Malone Health Clinic, open half days Monday through Friday, and the practice in Marianna. As the Malone clinic grows, his hours there will be expanded.

His salary is paid by the National Health Service Corps, and the clinic, now housed in its own building, operates on funds from the Rural Health Clinic Act. Dr. Hoff expects that the clinic will be self-supporting eventually, enabling Mr. McHugh to leave the Corps. Increasingly, Dr. Hoff sees his role as that of a manager of paramedical personnel, and if the Malone Medical Clinic succeeds, he is considering opening satellite clinics in other towns that have expressed interest.

There had never been a nurse practitioner in either town before, but after 3 months Hoff reported that Frank McHugh was being well accepted. There are patients who balk at seeing a nurse practitioner instead of a physician (the Malone clinic is always busier when Dr. Hoff is there), but there are also patients who request Mr. McHugh.

Working with a nurse practitioner gives Dr. Hoff several advantages. It



The Jackson Hospital in Marianna maintains high standards of care. Cardiac patient Vessie Safford rests during hospitalization for edema

allows him to provide better care because he is free to concentrate on sicker patients, and this, he believes, make him a better clinician. Second, if he wanted to practice privately later on — and he did — it would allow him to provide proper care for Medicaid patients, whom he feels he couldn't afford to treat as a solo physician. "They have less resources and less incentive. Since there's no cost, they can see a doctor whenever they want." Yet Medicaid reimburses only \$9.50 per office visit, and Dr. Hoff estimates that from January to July 1978 it cost him \$9.45, no salary or profit included, to see a patient. The solution: a nurse practitioner, whose salary is less than half that of a physician. He hopes that the increased number of patients thus seen will bring the per patient cost down.

At the end of his first year in

Marianna the practice was thriving, and Dr. Hoff could have left the Corps. But he chose to remain a second year because he knew some of the practice's growth would go to his new associates: the nurse practitioner and his partner.

Dr. Hoff had known Dr. Albert Folds for many years — their wives were childhood friends. Marianna needed more physicians, and the percentage of new patients in his own practice indicated that the growth was getting out of hand. In addition, he needed coverage for his obstetrical patients, since at the time none of the local physicians would manage patients with the Lamaze method.

So he encouraged Dr. Folds, who was in private practice near Cape Canaveral, to join the Corps and come to Marianna as his partner. However, the partnership has not



Bob Hoff and Frank McHugh, nurse practitioner, provide health care services to Malone, population 4,000, from this clinic

worked out quite as expected. Both doctors are quick to say that they are very different and their work styles are not compatible. Dr. Folds, for example, sees patients at a more leisurely rate than Dr. Hoff and sometimes keeps other patients waiting. Accustomed to being seen on time, Dr. Hoff's patients complain. Thus, when Dr. Folds leaves the Corps in another year, he will probably practice separately, although the two will continue to provide coverage for each other, and Dr. Folds fully intends to remain in Marianna.

Rewards and Problems

Overall, Dr. Hoff rates his satisfaction in Marianna as "pretty high." There is no question about being able to make a living. He likes to see 30 to 40 patients a day, or 5 an hour. At this rate he feels he can provide good care and still make a good living. With 30 hours a week in the office and an average charge of \$16, about half of which goes to expenses, he is left with an hourly rate of \$40. But he puts in another 35 to 45 hours a week in rounds at the hospital and in medicine-related activities, giving him an hourly wage of \$16 to \$17 — "what a good union plumber earns."

He enjoys the respect of the medical establishment and of the town. "It's ego-stimulating," he admits. "A lot of stroking goes on by the patients here, and the few bad experiences are well compensated for by the others."

The hospital he rates "quite good for the size." Medical audits and medical reviews are complete. All records are reviewed periodically; questions raised by a reviewer must be answered, and there are fines for overdue charts: \$2 per chart every 2 weeks. A \$25 fine is levied against a physician who doesn't attend a committee or staff meeting.

No one escapes criticism. "I got chewed out because I discharged a patient 2 days after a C-section," Dr. Hoff says. "But I try to treat the whole patient, and there are things they didn't know. This patient had a bikini cut, which allowed faster ambulation. She had kept herself in good condition during the prenatal period, and she was begging to go home. She had no insurance and she had a lot of family, a good support system. The anxiety caused by the extra costs far outweighed any benefits from an extended stay. I followed her closely in the office and had good results."

In another case, he discharged a

patient 5 hours after a normal delivery, because she was breast-feeding and the hospital had no rooming-in plan. She wanted to go home. To make peace, Dr. Hoff agreed to keep maternity patients in the future for 12 hours or else to have them sign a medical release.

"I don't see why they should worry about it. I'd get sued, not them," he said. He realizes, though, that they are trying to protect him and that his training has been a little different from theirs.

On other issues he is hopeful of prevailing. Recently, he learned that the wife of a Marianna physician was planning to have her baby in another town because pictures were not permitted in the Jackson Hospital delivery room. "I've learned a little about politics since I've been here," Dr. Hoff comments. "I'll use this as a lever."

On the minus side, Dr. Hoff is disappointed by a lack of communication among his co-workers. In addition to the nurse practitioner and partner, there are five full-time employees in the office: two nurses, a clinic manager, receptionist, and a clerk/nurse's assistant. He points to a cardboard carton on the floor that overflows with papers — projects he would like to develop. "I have a lot of ideas and I like bouncing them off people," he says. It was one reason he wanted a partner in the first place. But he knows that if he wants to institute patient flow sheets, for example, he'll have to plot it out himself.

"Maybe I'm unreasonable," he qualifies, "maybe it's my fault. I like to sit around and make decisions and have others carry them out." Nonetheless, there is a lack of ideas coming from others, and he looks forward to the periodic arrival of medical students from Miami (where he remains on the faculty as assistant professor in family medicine) and from Savannah and Pensacola.

Keeping informed isn't difficult, he finds because of the AMA Library, a medical journal club in Marianna, and numerous medical society meetings around the State. He serves as a member of the board of directors of the Florida Academy of Family Physicians and the Florida Cancer Society and as a member of the board of trustees of the Northwest Florida Heart Association. The invitation to serve on the Health Services Agency board came, he believes, as a direct result of his involvement with the Corps. These organizations particularly interest him for their role in patient education.

As for the community board that, for 2 years, governed the NHSC practice, Dr. Hoff felt that he had had a good working relationship with them. It took him time to convince the board to spend money generated by the practice on the Malone Medical Clinic. He believed it would be money well spent to provide health care for local people; the board believed that under the letter of the Corps agreement they were obligated to return the money to the Corps. Corps officials were consulted, and the money was spent to establish the new clinic.

John Manor, president of the Citizens State Bank and chairman of the community board, said he is pleased at the impact of the Corps physicians on the community. He cited particularly the new ideas they have introduced and the fact that having new doctors made it easier to attract other doctors.

However, Mr. Manor said, the board would have liked more control over the practice. "The doctor should be made aware that he is working for the community, for the board." For his part, Dr. Hoff maintains that it was agreed from the beginning that the board was there to assist him and that he wouldn't



John Manor, chairman of the community board, and Jeanette Cusson, site administrator, discuss clinic business matters

have stayed if it had been any other way.

Other criticism of the Corps program came from the county health director, Dr. Dean Steward. In an area where 20 percent of the population is on Medicaid and others cannot afford medical care, he believes the Corps is not meeting an urgent need: care of the poor. "We could not get the Corps doctors to take care of the Medicaid O.B. patients until we went to the Corps and complained," he said. At the same time he recognizes that, "If a Corps doctor is going to come in and intends to build up a private practice, then he's going to be interested in caring for private patients and not Medicare and Medicaid." His conclusion: No man can serve two masters.

Dr. Hoff said he thought the normal maternity patients should be cared for by a midwife and those with complications should be — and are — seen by the physicians. It was expected that the problem would be alleviated by the upcoming arrival of a Corps midwife who will work with the public health department's midwife. Together, they will be able to serve several counties in addition to Jackson County.

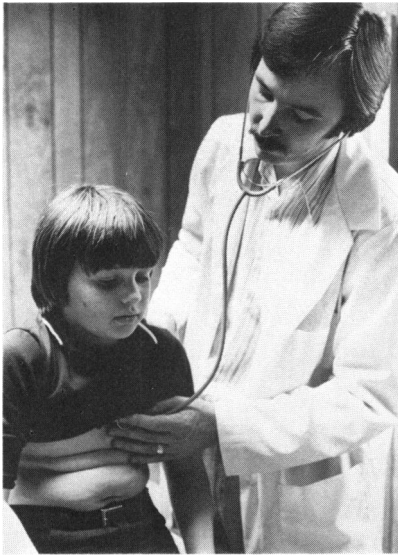
Steward's superior, Florida State Health Officer, Dr. Charlton Prather, is primarily concerned that a Corps physician once placed in a community, remain there. "There are towns in Florida where we could take a Harvard medical graduate who was first in his class and they'd run him out of town in 3 days," he said. From this perspective, Marianna is an unquestioned success. "We got docs who were very folksy. They were accepted, and the health of Marianna is improved because of it."

The Personal Side

As we headed out of town in Bob Hoff's blue truck toward his farm, passing gently rolling fields of hay broken by lines of towering old live oaks, he talked about the personal side of coming to Marianna. Friday is his day off, and he is dressed much as he dresses for work in an open-necked shirt and Levis.

Most of his free time is spent at the farm where he has a dozen cows, several horses, and is learning to grow hay and rye. A massive pecan tree provides enough nuts for his children to gather and sell.

"There's always so much to do, I'm never bored," he says, adding



Patient at the Malone clinic waits for Frank McHugh to finish the examination

that he feels, as much as he wants to, that he belongs here. There may be social cliques in Marianna (the old line families enjoy a reputation far and wide for being snobbish) but he isn't interested in a lot of parties in any case.

For his wife Hazel, moving to Marianna was coming home. "There must be some things I don't like," she said earlier, "but I can't think what they are." She teaches school and, after working as a substitute the first year, obtained the full-time job she wanted. She also enjoys the neighbors who are friendlier than those she knew in Miami. One neighbor let the Hoffs keep their horses in her backyard; another frequently brings them something good to eat — homemade jelly, a fried apple pie, a pecan pie — and in return they assist her with taking care of her property.

The move was difficult for the older Hoff children; there are four altogether, aged 16 to 22. They found it hard to make new friends, and living outside of town accentuated their feelings of isolation. With time they have begun to adjust.

Bob Hoff tossed some hay to the horses. "I worked hard under the Corps because I knew I was going to

go private. I frankly work harder now that I'm out of the Corps." The decision to go private was one he thought hard about. He felt free to do as he wanted while in the Corps and, had he remained, he could have retired in 5 more years, due to his time in the Air Force. So he probably lost out financially by going private. On the other hand, he has more money now, and he can make his decisions expeditiously.

He cites other reasons. As much as possible, he believes, medicine should remain private because it keeps cost down. He feels, too, that the Corps did its job in getting him started in Marianna and it would be wrong for him to remain in the Corps. But at bottom he left the Corps for the same reason that he left the Air Force: "I like being independent."

This is a fortunate viewpoint in that local feeling happens to run high against government programs. As John Manor, chairman of the community board, expressed it: "If a doctor can't make it on his own in 3 years, we think there's something wrong with him. We wouldn't want him."

Mr. Manor allows, however, that the Corps is one of the better ideas he has seen come out of the Federal Government and says that the arrival in Marianna of the Corps doctors had "a tremendous impact." New ideas began to be heard at hospital committee meetings. The older doctors began discussing partnerships, nurse practitioners, and other ideas that were never even mentioned before. Whereas doctors' hours in Marianna had been contracting over the years — most doctors worked a 4-day week or less — after Dr. Hoff and Dr. Folds arrived and set an example, the other physicians began expanding their hours.

Further, the old and poor of Malone now have health care through Dr. Hoff's satellite clinic. This benefits the Marianna hospital

as well, since more patients are referred there. Marianna women may now choose to have their babies by the Lamaze method — an opportunity that was not available previously and is still not generally available in the region. Women now come from as far away as Alabama to have their babies in Marianna.

After the Corps' physicians arrived, some of the other physicians also began accepting Medicaid patients, and an informal system developed by which they are shared among all the town's doctors.

Among local residents who have benefited personally from the Corps presence are the Lamaze instructor who, prior to the arrival of a Corps physician, could not find a doctor to sponsor her; the Jackson Hospital nurse, Frank McHugh, whom Dr. Hoff enlisted for nurse practitioner training; and the nurses who are employed in Dr. Hoff's office.

Dana O'Connor, L.P.N., said that other doctors' nurses in town are generally treated as aides, but that she is able to work closely with the doctor: "He encourages us to learn. When he's treating a patient, we're there. We don't just take blood pressures. We get to know the patient. This enables us to help patients better."

But most important, many in Marianna believe, has been the very presence of a Corps doctor in their town. For years community leaders had tried unsuccessfully to infuse the aging, overtaxed medical community with new blood. Once they acquired a new physician, he served as a magnet. Other factors might well have contributed to the influx of physicians on the heels of the Corps presence, but board chairman Manor and established physicians alike agree that the arrival of the first new doctor was critical. As proof, they cite with no small pleasure the arrival of six new physicians in Marianna, including the two Corps members, within the last 2 years.